

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Kelley-Reppert Motor Company Building

other name/site number Kelley-Williams Motor Company Building

2. Location

street & town 422 Admiral Boulevard N/A not for publication

city or town Kansas City N/A vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Jackson code 095 zip code 64106

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mark A. Miles
Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO

09/22/04
Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- ☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ determined eligible for the
National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.
- ☐ removed from the National
Register.
- ☐ other, (explain:) _____

Keiley-Reppert Motor Company
Name of Property

Jackson County, MO
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE:Specialty Store

Current Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>Concrete</u>
walls	<u>Brick</u>
roof	<u>Asphalt</u>
other	<u>Terracotta</u>

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

8. Description**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1920 -1940

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Keene & Simpson

Winn, E. L., Construction Company

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other Name of repository:

Missouri Valley Room, Kansas City Public Library.

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Kelley-Reppert Motor Company
Name of Property

Jackson County, MO
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than 1

UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 11 3/6/3/5/7/7 4/3/2/9/6/7/9
Zone Easting Northing

2 1 1/1/1/1/1 1/1/1/1/1
Zone Easting Northing

3 1 1/1/1/1/1 1/1/1/1/1
Zone Easting Northing

4 1 1/1/1/1/1 1/1/1/1/1
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Property Tax No. N/A

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth Rosin, Partner

organization Historic Preservation Services, LLC

date May 10, 2004

street & number 323 West 8th Street, Suite 112

telephone 816-221-5133

city or town Kansas City

state MO zip code 64105

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs: Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items: (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

name/title McCownGordon Construction LLC

street & number One West Armour Boulevard, Suite 200

telephone 816-960-1111

city or town Kansas City

state MO zip code 64111

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Number 7 Page 1

Kelley-Reppert Motor Company Building
Jackson County, Missouri

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION STATEMENT

The Kelley-Reppert Motor Company Building, located at 422 Admiral Boulevard, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, is a commercial building with a rectangular footprint and flat roof. The building spans the width of the block between Locust and Oak streets. Its primary façade that faces south onto Admiral Boulevard is three stories above grade, including an obscured mezzanine level. Because of the change in grade, the north (rear) elevation reveals four stories. The Kelley-Reppert Motor Company Building is an excellent example of the early twentieth century American Movement commercial style. The symmetrical treatment of the façade, the classically detailed entrance surrounds, and the patterned brickwork and terracotta detailing all reference the Colonial Revival architecture popular at the time. Dark red brick and terracotta trim clad the exterior of the reinforced concrete structure. Red-tinted mortar fills the raked joints. A concrete water table covers the lower level on the east and west elevations and wraps around the front façade, forming the bulkhead below the showroom display windows. Brick pilasters with terracotta capitals symmetrically divide the elevations into four bays on the south (front) elevation and three bays on the east and west elevations. A paneled brick spandrel separates the first and second stories on these three elevations. Multiple elements compose the cornice. Pilasters support a continuous terracotta belt course above the second story. Above the belt course, a brick band punctuated by rectangular terracotta panels is above each pilaster. Above the brick band, a second terracotta belt course projects from the wall of the building; a paneled brick parapet wall with terracotta coping tops this belt course. Centered above each of the front corner bays (southeast and southwest) are terracotta panels that were each originally inscribed with the word "Ford." These panels are slightly taller than the brick band, providing variation to the height of the parapet.

The Kelley-Reppert Motor Company property contains two buildings. In addition to the showroom/service building there is a small, non-contributing garage at the northwest corner of the lot.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

EXTERIOR

While the south (front) elevation of the building appears to be two stories tall, the large first-story display windows obscure the mezzanine level and the basement is not visible. The north (rear) elevation reveals the building's four stories. Fenestration identifies the original function of the interior spaces. The retail showroom has large plate glass display windows, while the service areas have multi-light industrial-style steel windows.

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As indicated by the large metal frame display windows topped by bands of transom windows, the retail showroom occupied the building's first story and mezzanine, spanning the south elevation and extending roughly two-thirds the depth of the building to the north. The transoms' original prism glass, which is shown on the building plans, was replaced with a combination of clear glass, opaque glass, and plywood panels. A few windows containing one-over-one light double-hung sashes punctuate the transom band on the east and west elevations. Entrances to the showroom are centered in the easternmost and westernmost bays of the south elevation. Plate glass windows flank the entrances. The non-historic east entrance features a pair of wood doors with full glazing below a transom panel. The west entrance retains its original wood and glass door. The surround framing the door features a pair of curved brackets supporting a molded cornice and a stepped parapet. The street address "416" is carved into the parapet.

The entire basement, the rear one-third of the first story and the mezzanine, and the entire second story provided service functions. The northernmost bays on the east and west elevations each feature two levels of openings that provide natural light to the first-story and mezzanine levels. The single windows are single, nine-light industrial-style steel units with an upper pivot sash and stone sills. On the south elevation, these windows are arranged in bands that fill each bay. The west elevation contains three windows that are regularly spaced across the bay; the east elevation contains two windows flanking a doorway that provides access to the fire escape on each level. Similar individual windows pierce the water table at the basement level on the east and west elevations. On each of these elevations, these windows are found in the middle bay and at the north end of the north bay, next to an overhead garage door and a pedestrian door.

On the north (rear) elevation, the exposed concrete structural members create a four-bay by four-story grid (basement, first story, mezzanine, and second story). Brick fills the voids within the grid. Two single industrial-style windows with projecting brick header sills also pierce each bay. At the second bay from the west, at the ground level, there is a low concrete platform and a pedestrian entrance. A non-historic canopy hangs from cables above the entrance. The flat canopy has a wood frame and a corrugated fiberglass surface.

Three structural elements rise above the roof surface. A rectangular brick elevator penthouse is located near the center of the roof. It has a very shallow hip roof, metal louver vents at the top of the east and west walls, a pedestrian door at the top of the north elevation, and a rolling metal overhead door in the base of the west elevation. The height of this feature and the incorporation of concrete piers at each of the four corners anticipated the construction of an additional story to the building. "Holland Nameplate & Engraving," representing the business of a previous building owner, is painted on the west and south sides

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Kelley-Reppert Motor Company Building
Jackson County, Missouri

of the penthouse. Near the northwest corner of the roof, there is a brick chimney flue that is painted white and a small, parged brick penthouse that shelters the top of the stairwell.

INTERIOR

The interior of the Kelley-Reppert Motor Company Building is organized around a grid of reinforced concrete piers. Five piers span the building from east to west and four piers span the building from north to south. The piers along the perimeter of the building are square, while those on the interior are round. All have flared mushroom capitals and thin square concrete platforms that are sandwiched between the capitals and the ceiling.

The interior of the building has two distinct appearances. The formal showroom generally includes the south (front) two-thirds of the building at the first-story and mezzanine levels. The remainder of the building, which provided service functions, is unornamented and utilitarian in character.

The showroom has a very polished appearance. The walls, ceilings, and piers all have a smooth plaster finish. Square red ceramic tiles with black grout cover the floor. The narrow space above and below the main display windows has a paneled wood treatment. Paneled wood bases have been built around the piers.

From the north, the mezzanine extends into the showroom space a distance equal to one bay and is aligned with the interior grid of round piers. A low paneled wall frames the upper part of the mezzanine. Below the west half of the mezzanine is a sales office created by paneled wood half walls with plate glass windows above. A paneled wood door provides access to this space. A second office and automobile parts counter previously located below the east half of the mezzanine are no longer extant. A full-height plaster wall at the back of the mezzanine divides the showroom from the workspace. The upper level of the mezzanine was the general office. At the west end of the mezzanine there is a walk-in vault with its original vault door intact.

Storage for automobile parts occupied the back part of the first-story and mezzanine, behind the offices. The wall that divides the offices from the storerooms bisects the metal staircase that connects the ground floor with the mezzanine level. The stair has an ornamental design of interlocking circles stamped in the risers, square metal newel posts, and square balusters. The same railing wraps around the top of the stairwell on the upper level. Two non-historic window openings pierce the east wall of the automobile parts storage room.

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Kelley-Reppert Motor Company Building
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The treatment of the building's service areas is markedly different from that of the showroom. The brick walls are exposed and the concrete floors, ceilings, and piers are unpainted. The piers are also unplastered and the visible pattern of the formwork creates an unsmooth, polygonal surface. The upper floor has some non-historic partition walls, windows, and doors that divide the space. Remnants of asbestos tile are on the floor.

A large freight elevator in the northeast quadrant of the building provides the main vertical circulation. It runs between the basement and roof in a brick-walled shaft. A stairwell in the northwest corner of the building also provides circulation from the sub-basement to the roof.

A non-historic furnace and galvanized metal ductwork are found in the second story. The showroom retains its the original cast iron radiators around the perimeter of the space.

SITE

The Kelley-Reppert Motor Company Building faces south toward Admiral Boulevard. The building occupies the front half of the lot, spanning the short block between Locust and Oak streets. Concrete sidewalks flank the south and west sides of the building; brick paving is visible on the vacated Page Street right-of-way to the east. A large asphalt parking lot is at the rear of the building. The grade drops sharply behind the parking lot. An early twentieth century auto service station occupies the north half of the city block.

In addition to the auto dealership, there is a small one-story garage at the northwest corner of the parking lot. Resting on a limestone foundation, this structure has parged brick walls and a flat asphalt roof with header brick coping. The walls extend above the roof surface and form a wide stepped parapet on the west elevation. Two industrial-style steel windows with six-over-three lights and brick header sills pierce the west elevation. Plywood covers a pedestrian doorway in the south elevation. At the south end of the east elevation, a paneled wood garage door fills the single vehicular entrance. A large sheet of bead board covers the remainder of this elevation. Constructed by 1939, it is unclear what function this building served within the Kelley-Reppert Motor Company, and it is considered a non-contributing element of the National Register property.

INTEGRITY

Although the Kelley-Reppert Motor Company Building has experienced a few alterations, the majority of the elements that define its distinctive character in the areas of design, materials, and workmanship remain intact. Notably, the reinforced concrete structure punctuated by a grid of substantial columns and piers, the distinction between formal public spaces and utilitarian workspaces, and the elegant detailing of

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Kelley-Reppert Motor Company Building
Jackson County, Missouri

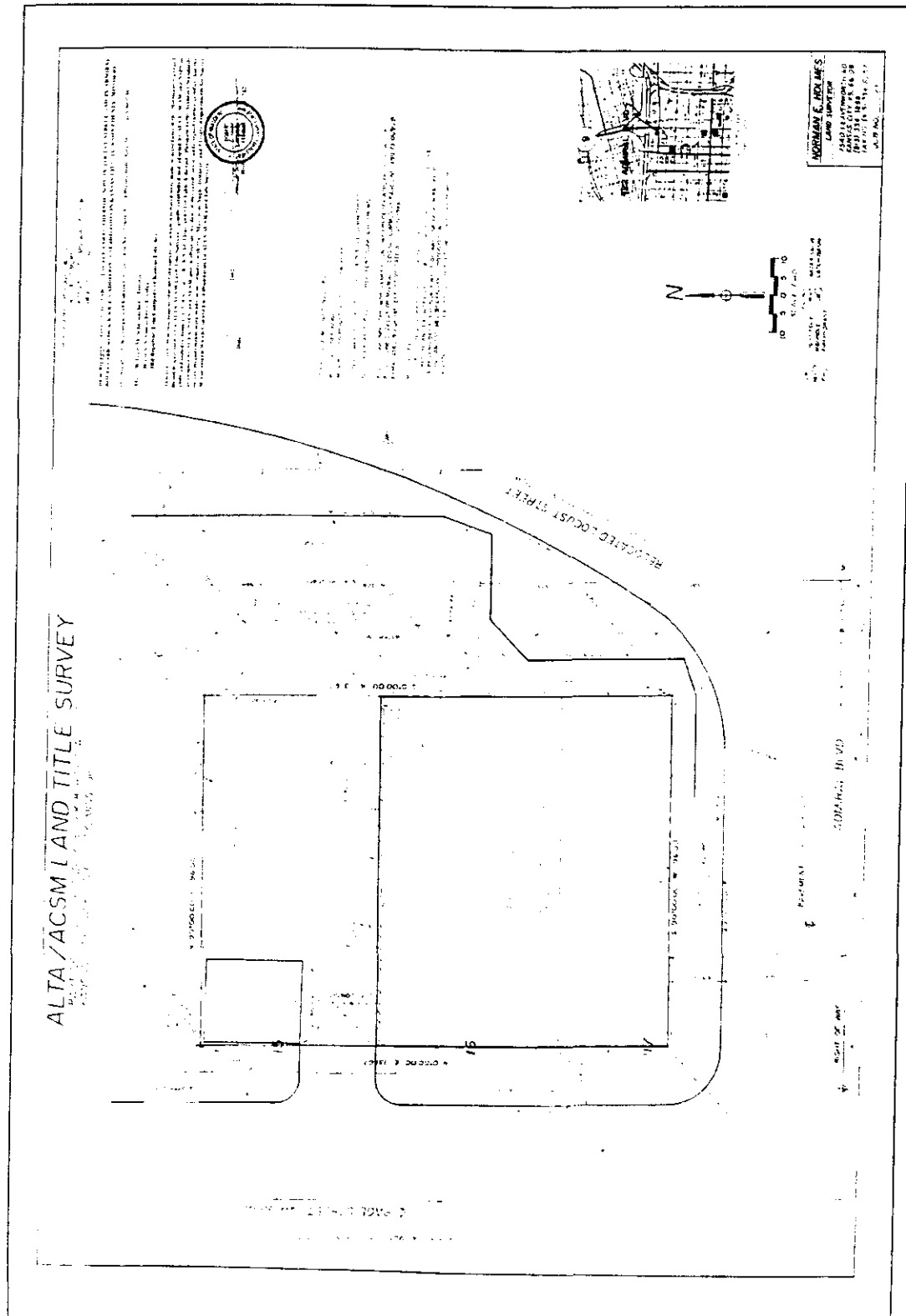
the showroom continue to convey the original function of the property. The exterior also retains the patterned brickwork and terracotta detailing that reflect popular trends in commercial architectural styling at the end of World War I. These features, together with the building's form, configuration of spaces, and setting, clearly convey its original function as an early automobile dealership. The only alterations of note are the partial removal of the transoms above the showroom display windows, the alteration of one of the building's two main entrances, and the partial removal of office partitions and the removal of the automobile parts counter from the showroom space. None of these changes hinders the building from communicating its historic significance or associations.

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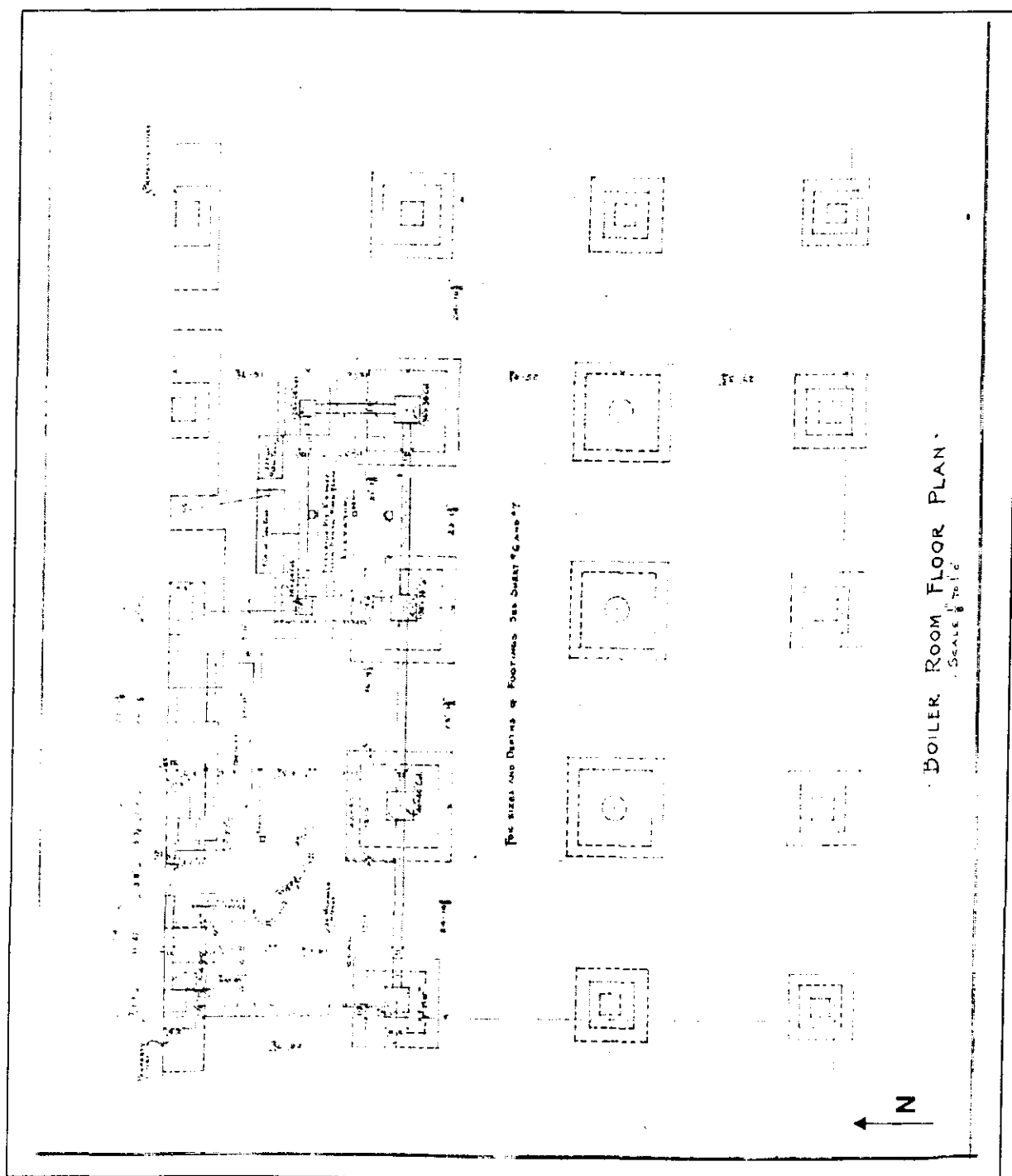
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Kelley-Reppert Motor Company Building
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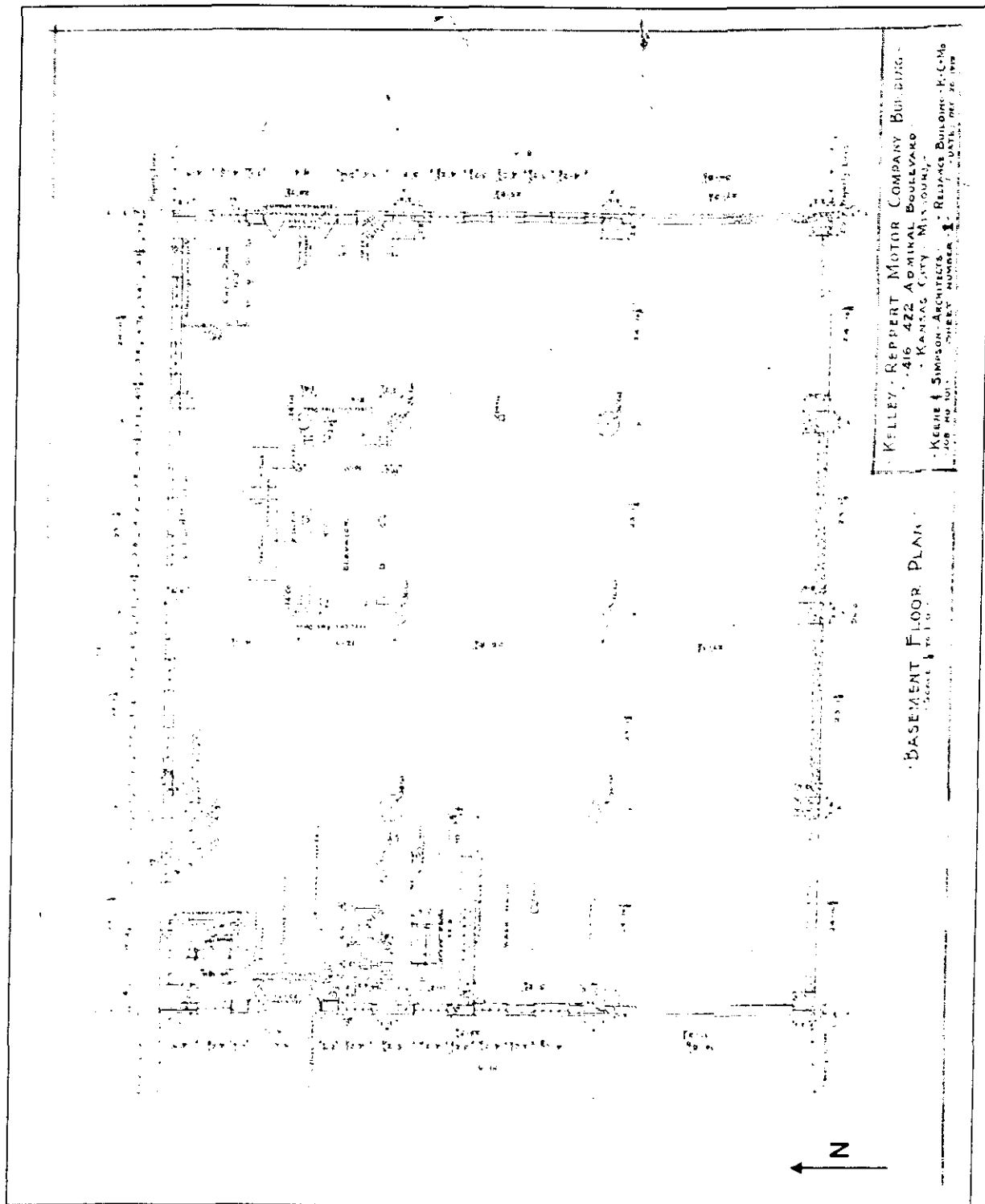


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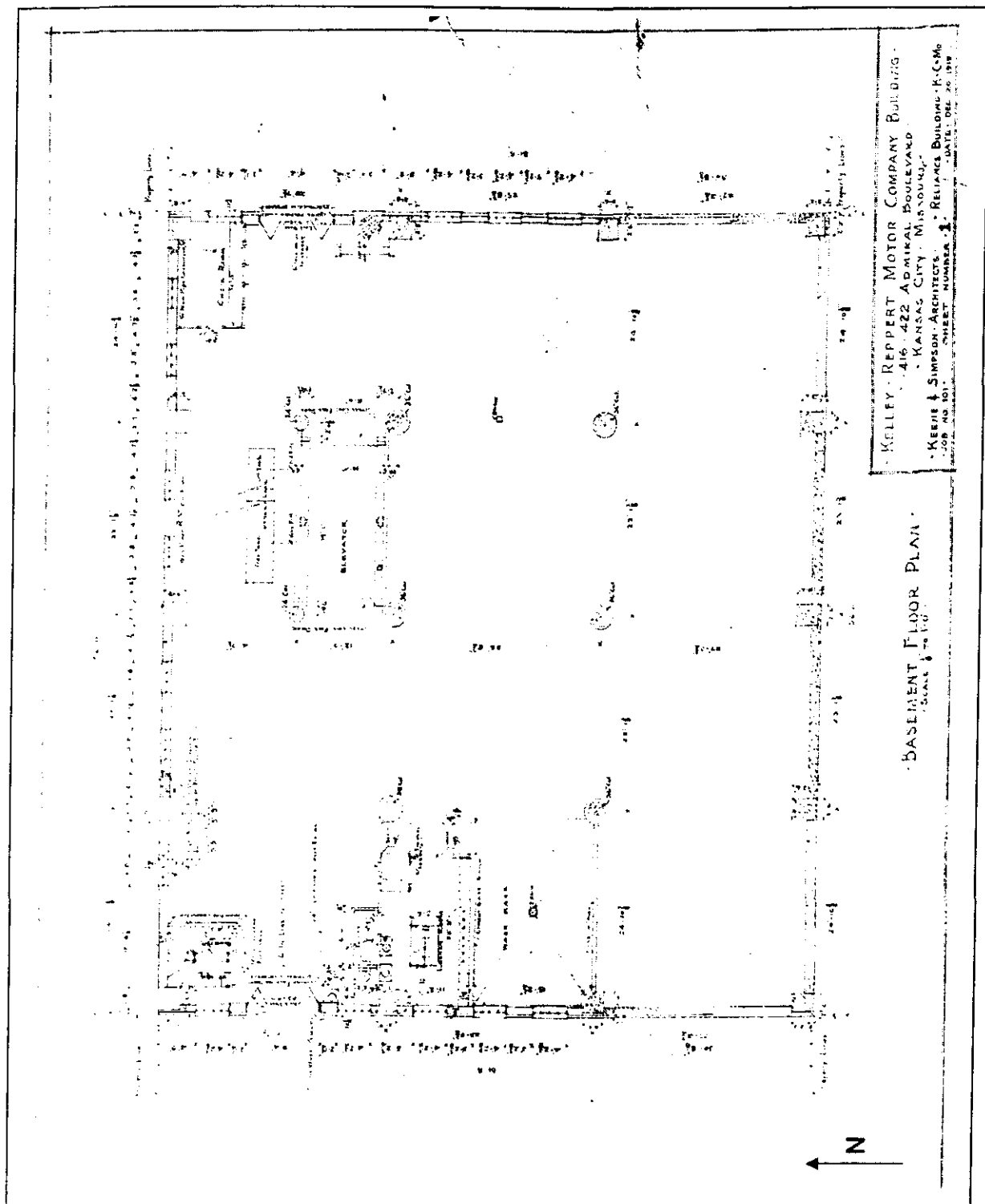


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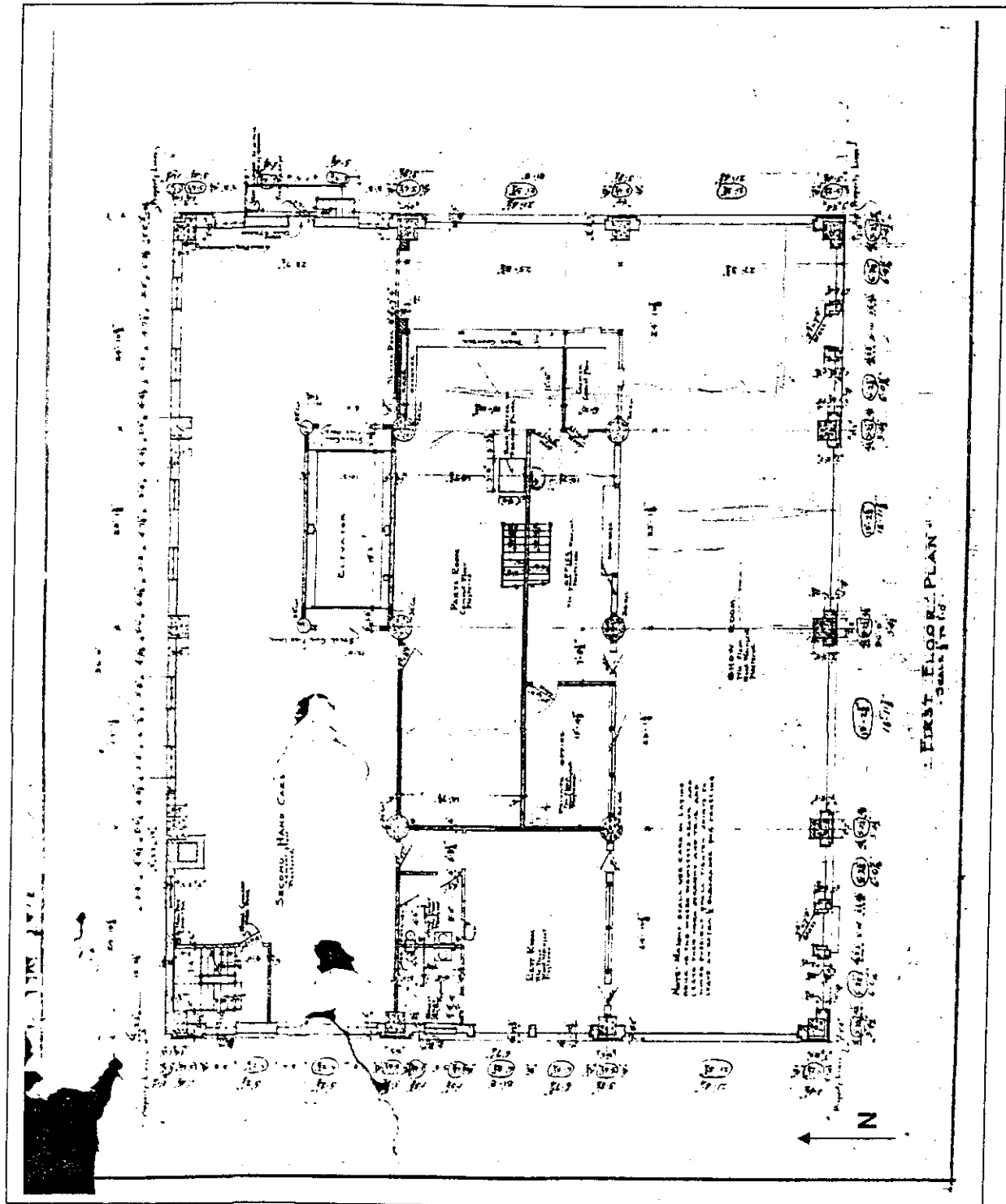


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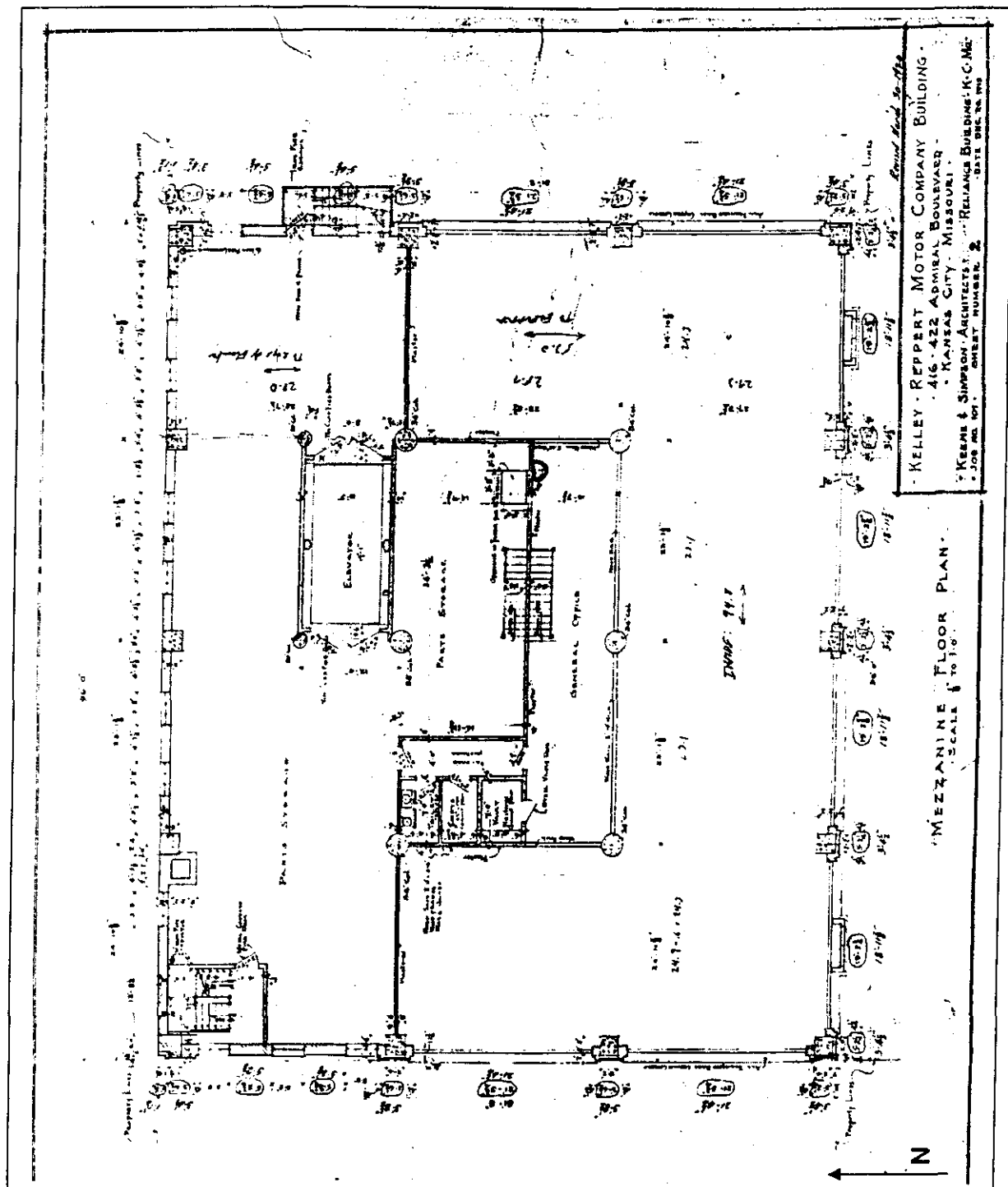
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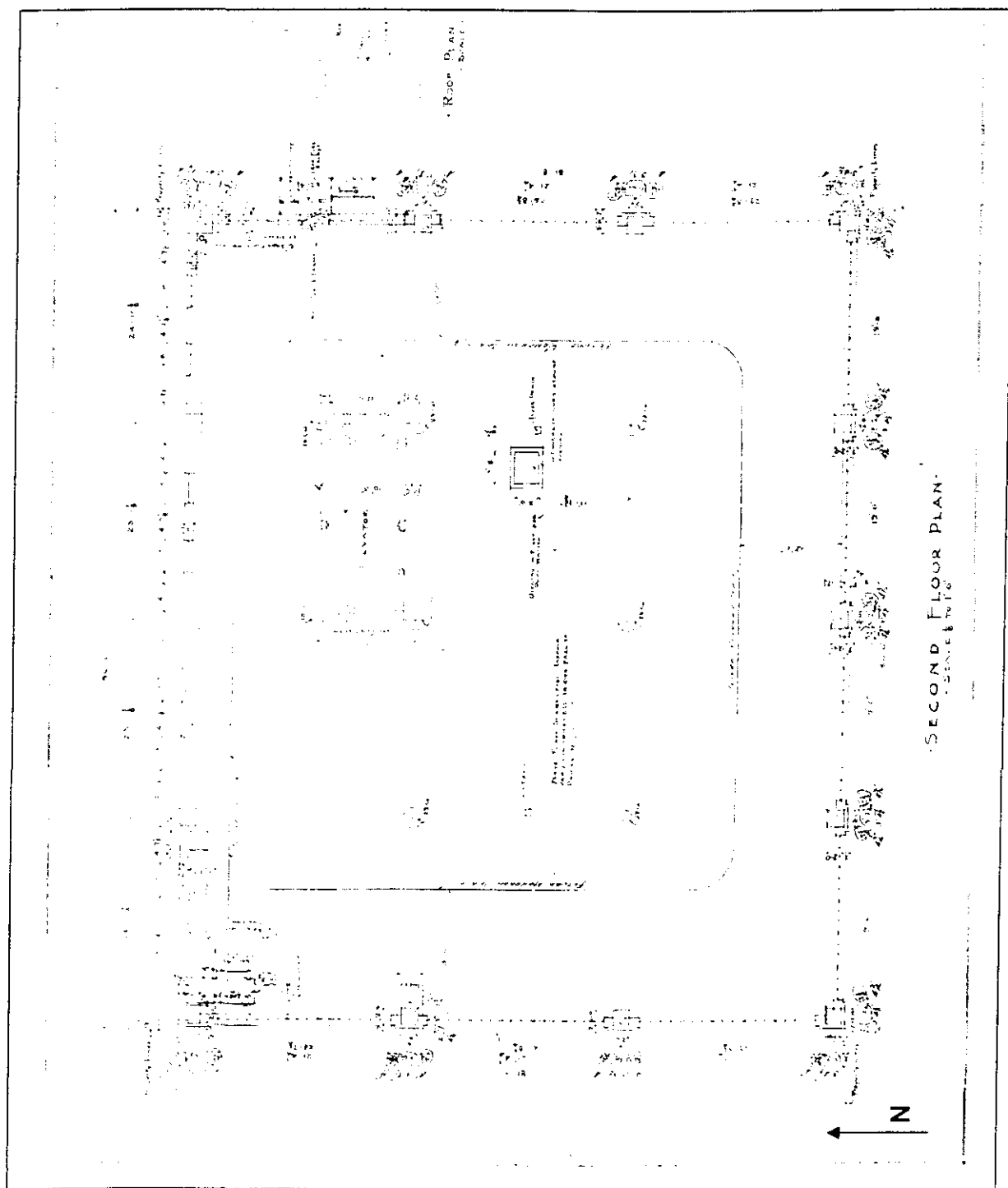


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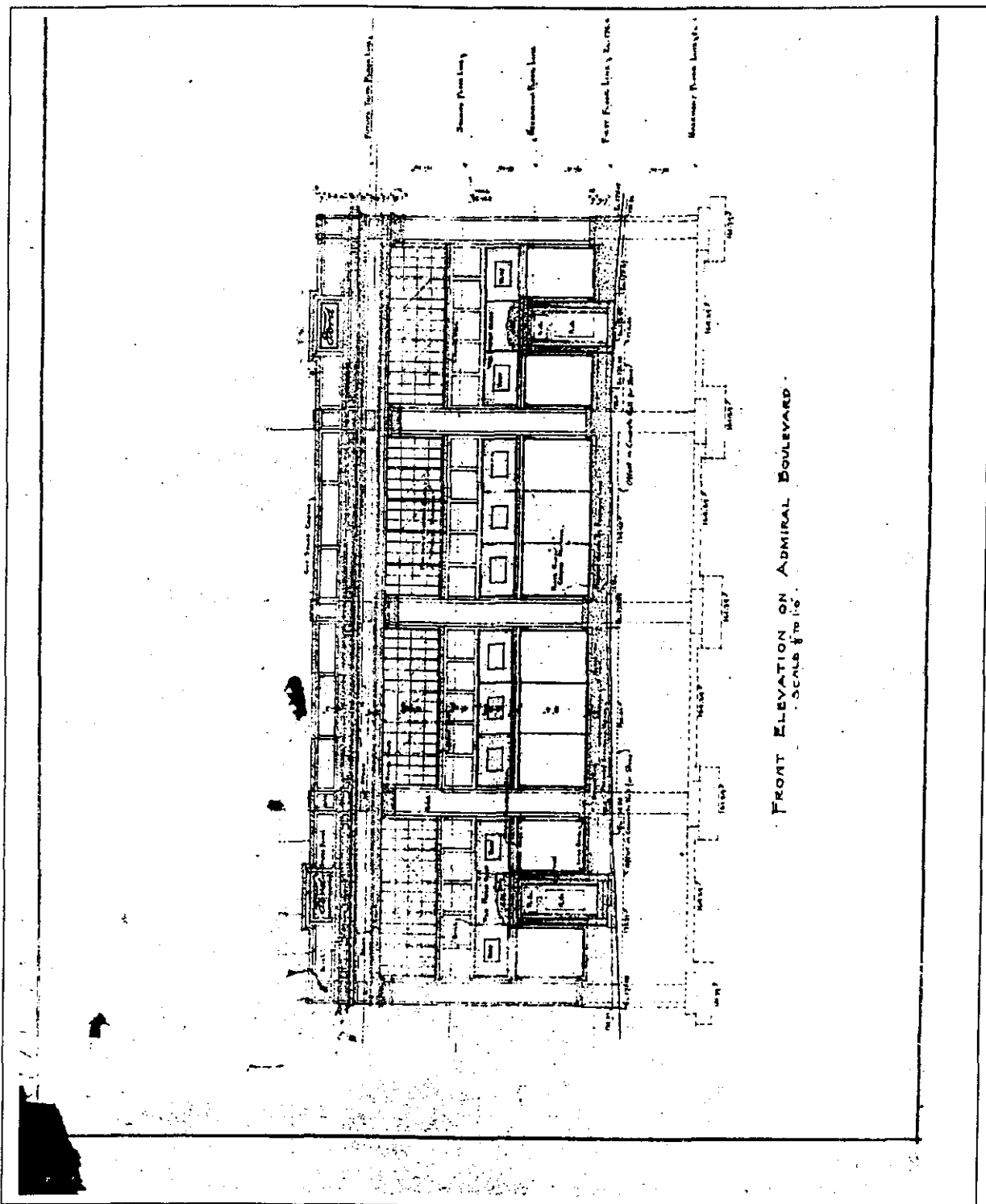


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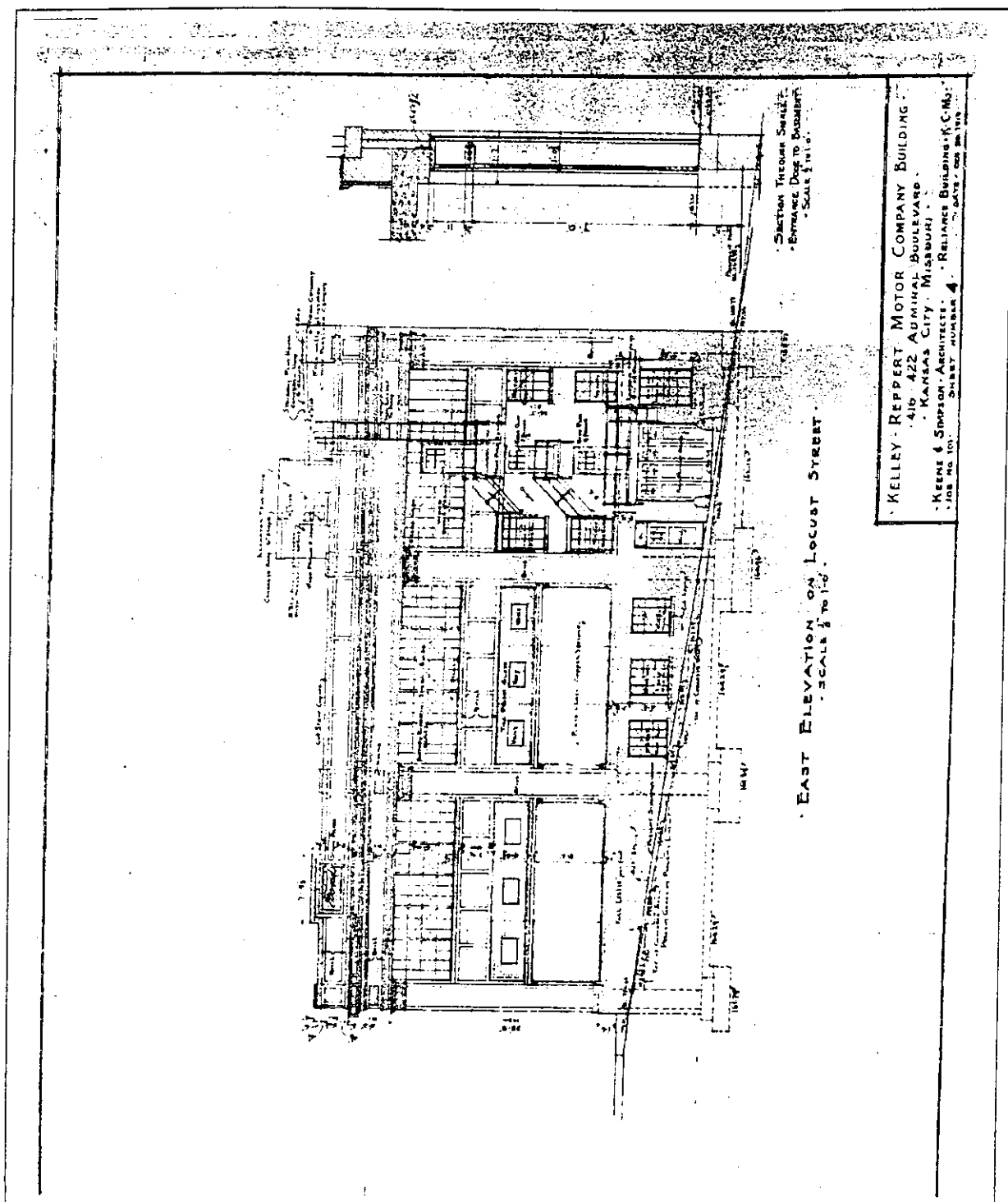


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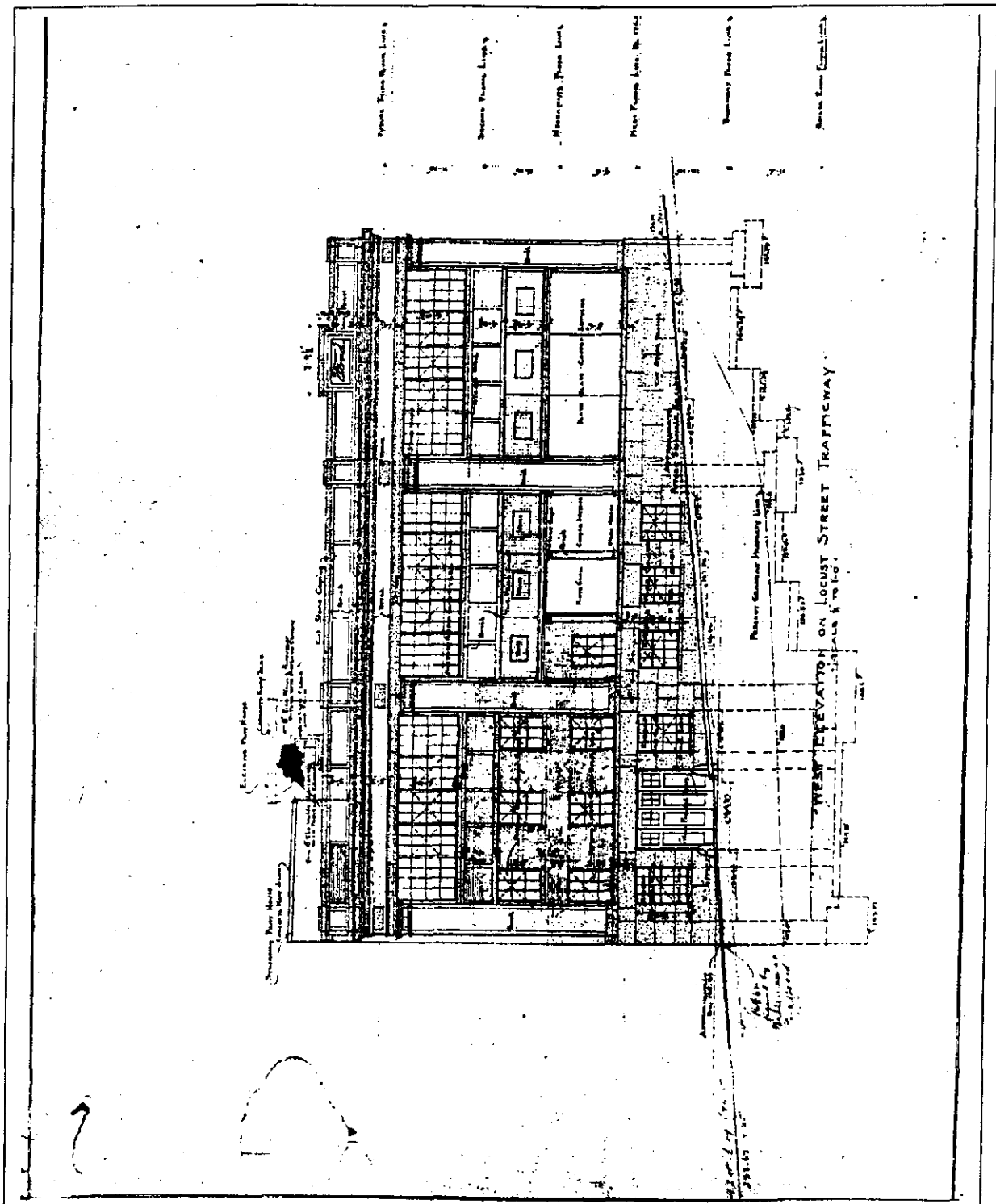


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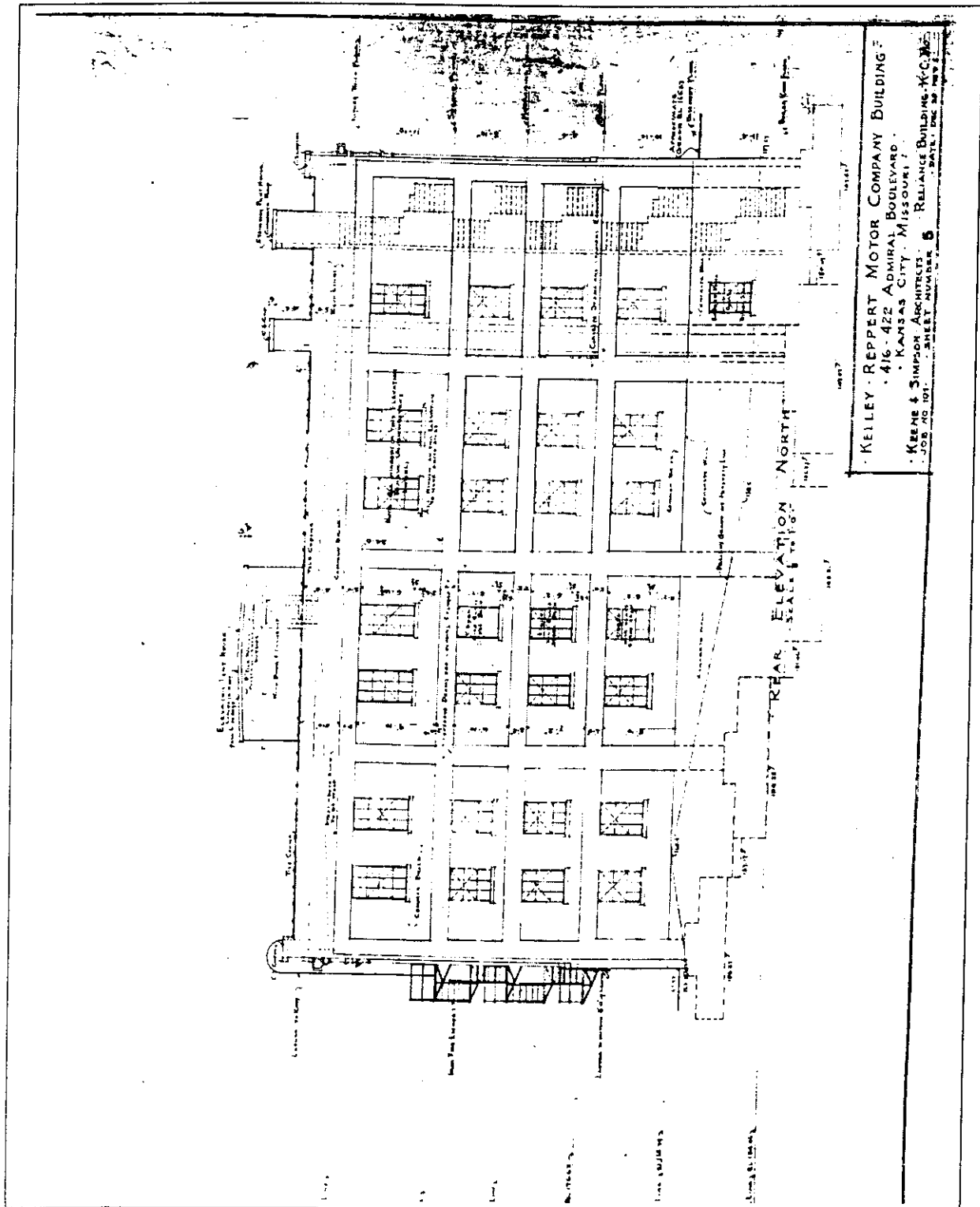


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Kelley-Reppert Motor Company Building
Jackson County, Missouri

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Kelley-Reppert Motor Company Building, located at 422 Admiral Boulevard, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for the area of COMMERCE and Criterion C for the area of ARCHITECTURE. Constructed in 1920 to house a Ford automobile dealership, the building is a locally significant example of the second generation of auto dealership design. The Kelley-Reppert Motor Company Building represents a building form designed to address the distinctive needs of an automobile dealership, which included a formal showroom and functional service and storage areas. Its substantial reinforced concrete structure illustrates the adaptation of this twentieth century construction technique for auto-related buildings. The brick cladding and restrained terracotta embellishments illustrate popular interpretations of commercial architecture and the established practice of disguising the concrete structure beneath. The interior featured a dichotomy between the elegant sales lobby and the utilitarian work areas. The Kelley-Reppert Motor Company Building is also significant for its twenty year association with the eponymous Ford dealership. Kelley-Reppert not only sold and serviced Ford vehicles, but was an authorized distributor of the vehicles as well.

The period of significance for the Kelley-Reppert Motor Company Building is 1920-1940. The beginning of this range reflects the date of construction. The ending date reflects the last year that the Kelley-Williams Motor Company operated in the building.

ELABORATION

THE EVOLUTION OF AUTOMOBILE COMMERCE

When first introduced at the turn of the twentieth century, auto production was a very time-consuming process, with each vehicle being assembled from start to finish before work began on the next.¹ This labor-intensive process kept automobile costs high – between \$2,000 and \$3,000 – roughly twice the annual income of an average worker in the United States.² As a result, during its first decade on the market, the automobile remained a vehicle for the wealthy, with only approximately forty-one hundred produced nationwide in 1900.³

¹ Robert Genat, *The American Car Dealership* (Osceola, Wisconsin: MBI Publishing Company, 1999), 8.

² Nicole M. Sabatini, "Request for Determination of Eligibility Assessment — Kirkwood Building, 1737 McGee Street, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri" (Kansas City, Missouri: Susan Richards Johnson & Associates, Inc., c.2000), 2.

³ Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 77.

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Kelley-Reppert Motor Company Building
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In an effort to increase profits, the legion of carmakers competing nationwide developed a variety of technological, marketing, and business strategies. Early innovations included the first step-in closed-car design (Cadillac's 1905 Osceola), as well as Charles F. Kettering's 1911 invention of the electric self-starter.⁴ However, the most significant innovation in the industry was Ford's introduction of the assembly line at the Highland Park, Michigan Model T manufacturing plant in 1913. The efficiency of this process drastically lowered the cost of production and allowed volume to rise and retail prices to drop. In addition, in 1914, Ford introduced the concept of the rebate, a marketing practice that remains popular. Other automobile manufacturers followed suit and once the automobile became affordable for the average American, its popularity skyrocketed. From 1914 to 1917, annual automobile production in the United States jumped from 573,000 to 1.9 million.⁵

During the early years of the twentieth century, the increasing popularity and availability of the automobile in Kansas City reflected national trends. Listings under "Automobiles" in the business section of *Hoye's Kansas City Directory* grew from a single vendor in 1900 to six vendors in 1903 to twenty vendors in 1906, including Kansas City's first Ford dealership, which opened in 1905 at 425 Delaware Street.⁶ In 1907, the city's first auto show attracted twenty thousand visitors, even though only a few hundred Kansas Citians actually owned automobiles. A mere four hundred cars maneuvered Kansas City streets at the time, whereas within fifteen years the number had grown to fifty-five thousand.⁷

Dealers were fundamental to the success of automakers during this time. The dealership was the first point of contact with the potential car-buying public. Automobile manufacturers, while focusing on technological innovations and improvements also developed vast retail networks by offering franchise opportunities to local businessmen nationwide. In exchange for selling rights within a defined territory, the franchise contract required the dealer to provide an adequate sales and service facility, proper signage, a stock of spare parts, and repair service for the cars they sold. Auto company representatives often visited the potential dealer on site to determine suitability. In addition, the dealer had to have at least one new model on display at all times. The defined sales territory prevented competition among dealers representing the same make of car and maintained the effectiveness of the franchise dealer system.⁸

⁴ General Motors, "Corporate History — 1910" [information online]; available from http://www.gm.com/company/corp_info/history/gmhis1910.html; Internet; accessed 5 November 2002.

⁵ Genat, 9.

⁶ *Thirty-sixth Annual Issue 1906 Hoye's Kansas City Directory* (Kansas City, Missouri: Hoye Directory Company, 1906).

⁷ "Kansas City's Motor and Street Growth Since 1908," *Kansas City (MO) Star*, 24 June 1923 (Mounted Clipping File, Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections).

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Kelley-Reppert Motor Company Building
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Kansas City's position as a prominent manufacturing and supply center ensured its role as a major player in the development of the automobile industry, not only in terms of manufacturing, but also as a regional center for automobile sales and distribution. The Kansas City, Missouri city directories corroborate this, with automobile and "motor car" company listings more than tripling in less than five years, growing from twenty in 1906 to seventy in 1910. By the end of the following decade, the number of automobile dealers outranked all other retail establishments with the exception of food vendors.⁹

In addition to a network of dealerships, large manufacturers established regional distributorships and factory branches in strategic commercial hubs nationwide. Kansas City's locale, combined with its superior rail and freight infrastructure, made it an ideal point for automobile distribution throughout the Midwest and Southwest. In 1909, these factors led Henry Ford to select the city as the location of the first Ford assembly plant outside of Detroit. The facility was constructed at 11th Street and Winchester Avenue in the Sheffield Industrial District on the far east side of Kansas City near the Blue River. When the first Model T rolled off its lines a few years later, the local press celebrated the event, reporting that the plant was capable of producing up to seven cars a day.¹⁰ As the demand for vehicles soared and the production process became increasingly automated, the Ford Motor Company added two stories to its Kansas City plant. By 1924, it was producing trucks as well as cars, and its capacity had increased to five hundred vehicles per day.¹¹

Gate's 1914 city directory for Kansas City, Missouri indicates that at least twenty-two auto manufacturers had either distributorships or factory branches in Kansas City, including Cadillac, Chevrolet, Oldsmobile, King, Overland, REO, Studebaker, Ford, Buick, and Packard.¹² By 1922, there were separate listings for "Automobile Agencies, Distributors and Direct Factory Branches," "Automobile Dealers," and "Automobiles and Supplies."¹³

These distributors enjoyed a variety of benefits, including a much wider sales territory, the ability to establish new franchises within that territory, and extended lines of credit with the manufacturer. Often,

⁸ Genat. 19.

⁹ Sherry Lamb Schirmer and Richard D. McKinzie, *At the River's Bend: An Illustrated History of Kansas City, Independence and Jackson County* (Woodland Hills, California: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1982), 229.

¹⁰ William D. Worley, *Kansas City: Rise of a Regional Metropolis* (Carlsbad, California: Heritage Media Corp., 2002) 162.

¹¹ Ibid..

¹² *Forty-fourth Annual Issue 1914 Kansas City, Missouri City Directory* (Kansas City, Missouri: Gate City Directory Company, 1914), 5-8, 2225-26.

¹³ *Fifty-second Annual Issue 1922 Kansas City Missouri City Directory* (Kansas City, Missouri: Gate City Directory Company, 1922), 2319.

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the distributor's employees received salaries directly from the manufacturer. In exchange for these perks, the distributor or factory branch had greater responsibilities than the dealer. In addition to expanded service and parts departments, the distributor's responsibilities included retrieving rail-shipped, semi-assembled automobiles and the subsequent assembly and transportation of these vehicles to a storage facility.¹⁴ These responsibilities required the distributor to maintain a full staff of factory-trained mechanics, sales staff, and managers.

During the earliest years of the automobile, dealerships nationwide located in downtown commercial districts adjacent to all other varieties of retail establishments. As the increasing popularity of the automobile stimulated the construction of new auto-specific buildings, a new type of commercial district developed — "Automobile Row." Located just outside the historic downtown, these areas were often on the streetcar line and included all kinds of automotive-related establishments ranging from new and used car sales to parts, service, and repair.

In Kansas City, Automobile Row first developed along the north-south arteries of Main Street, Grand Avenue, McGee and Locust streets between 11th and 18th streets. By 1906, almost 60 percent of the twenty-four listings under "Automobiles" in Hoyer's Kansas City Directory were located in this area.¹⁵ By 1910, the total number quadrupled, with the majority of new listings located along the same north-south arteries and extending as far south as 35th Street. Nevertheless, the heart of Kansas City's Automobile Row during the 1910s generally centered around McGee Street and Grand Avenue between 15th and 20th streets. This area included almost half of all automotive businesses in Kansas City in 1920.¹⁶

When Wallace O. Kelly and Eugene C. Reppert established their Ford dealership, it became the Ford Motor Company's third dealership and service center in Kansas City. Of the other two, one was on McGee Street, part of Automobile Row, and one was on East 18th Street, serving the city's growing neighborhoods on the east side of the city. Kelley and Reppert strategically chose a location that had access to major roads (east-west Admiral Boulevard and north-south Oak Street Trafficway and Locust Street, both of which connected to a vehicular bridge crossing the Missouri River) and was close to the central business district and the growing community of North Kansas City. There was also synergy. A

¹⁴ Genat. 20.

¹⁵ *Thirty-sixth Annual Issue 1906 Hoyer's Kansas City Directory* (Kansas City, Missouri: Hoyer Directory Company, 1906), 1544.

¹⁶ Sabatini, 4.

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number of service stations were located along Admiral Boulevard and 6th Street Trafficway; the Buick Motor Company dealership was located at 216 Admiral Boulevard, just two blocks to the west.¹⁷

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE AUTOMOBILE DEALERSHIP

The design and construction of the Kelley-Reppert Motor Company Building occurred during a highpoint in America's infatuation with the automobile and the rapid expansion of the auto industry. The construction techniques and arrangement of interior spaces illustrate a building type developed within the previous decade as the standard for optimal integration of automobile sales, service, and distribution. The design and layout of this building type accommodated an elegant sales space with functional service and storage spaces. The successful incorporation of these elements allowed the Kelley-Reppert Motor Company Building to serve its intended function for twenty years.

During the first decade of the automobile, sales and service occurred in facilities constructed for other functions, such as livery stables, carriage dealers, and blacksmith and bicycle shops. Viewed as a recreational vehicle for the wealthy, automobiles did not initially prompt the construction of new buildings and they were sold and serviced alongside earlier modes of transportation. However, the increasing popularity of the automobile eventually outpaced the existing retail infrastructure. By the early 1900s, automobile merchants outgrew their converted nineteenth century buildings, dropped their other product lines, and constructed the first generation of buildings intended for the specific purpose of marketing and servicing automobiles.

These first-generation buildings followed traditional one- and two-part commercial design, incorporating a storefront, an upper story, and a cornice. The only apparent functional modification of the typical Main Street storefront was the introduction of a larger display window to present the larger product and larger doorways to allow for the movement of automobiles in and out of the building. Otherwise, these buildings were indistinguishable from other businesses on Main Street.

No longer considered merely an amusement, by 1905 the automobile became a genuine means of transportation. Automobile sales increased more than 45-fold in the decade following 1900, with the units manufactured nationally increasing from approximately 4,100 to 186,000.¹⁸ Concurrent with its increase in popularity, a legion of carmakers and dealers materialized, all vying for the attention of the discriminating consumer. The buildings from which cars were sold and serviced became increasingly

¹⁷ The Buick Automobile Company Building was constructed in 1907-1908 at 216 Admiral Boulevard. It was nominated for listing in the National Register in 2004.

¹⁸ Liebs, 77.

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important in marketing strategy as a means of instilling both interest and confidence in the prospective buyer. A sturdy, well-designed building conveyed stability and longevity, while distinctive, elegant showrooms, patterned after the lobbies found in grand hotels and office buildings of the era, communicated quality and refinement.¹⁹

In 1907, Albert Kahn inaugurated the second generation of auto-specific buildings with his design for the Packard Motor Car Company in New York City. Kahn made significant structural and spatial improvements with his "all-under-one-roof design" while fulfilling popular expectations for commercial design.²⁰ The use of reinforced concrete, a recent technological innovation, was indispensable to the design of the structure. Its load-carrying capabilities, vibration resistance, and relative fireproof qualities made it ideal for the buildings within which automobiles were maneuvered and serviced. Terracotta effectively camouflaged the reinforced concrete structure of Kahn's three-story building. The interior spaces included an elegant two-story automobile showroom. Beyond the showroom, the atmosphere shifted to the often loud and dirty car repair and storage areas. Whereas the structural concrete columns in the showroom were masked with decorative plaster or marble for aesthetic purposes, the columns in the service and storage areas were left bare. The spatial arrangement successfully integrated the functionally varied interior spaces.

Kahn's design became a prototype for automobile sales, service, and distribution facilities. By the early 1910s, larger auto manufacturing companies adapted the format for their flagship retail locations. In a desire to influence their expanding national network of dealers and distributors, the companies invited franchise holders to tour these "model facilities" and encouraged them to adopt the format for their new buildings back home.

There is little doubt that Kahn's prototype inspired architects Keene & Simpson in their design of the Kelley-Reppert Motor Company Building. An excellent example of the format established by Kahn a decade earlier, the three-story reinforced concrete building includes an elegant automobile showroom with a twenty-foot-high ceiling and room to display several cars; a tile floor; and plaster walls, ceiling, and columns. Providing a barrier between the showroom and the unfinished service areas behind the sales floor were the offices at the rear of the showroom, a restroom, and the retail parts counter. These spaces included used car sales on the first floor, parts storage on the mezzanine, and a service area on the upper floor. Ringing the perimeter walls and punctuating each floor are reinforced concrete columns with flared mushroom capitals that support the continuous concrete floor slabs. A freight elevator near the

¹⁹ Ibid.

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center of the building carried automobiles between floors. While the Buick dealership up the street featured a similar commercial block exterior, it was clearly a more traditional Main Street building design with a traditional structural system composed of cast iron columns and heavy timber framing.

During the mid- to late 1910s, fifty different makes of automobiles were available in Kansas City, ranging in price from \$395 to \$10,000.²¹ As it was common during this period for speculative carmakers and dealers to fail in the vast and competitive auto market, a common concern for buyers was whether parts and service would be available for a particular make. In response, architects of second-generation auto-specific structures incorporated fine materials and decorative embellishments to convey traditional concepts of style and inspire confidence in the consumer. Rather than alarm the public with a bare concrete structure, architects clad these buildings in terracotta and brick. The design by Keene and Simpson for the Kelley-Reppert Motor Company Building was no exception. The textured brick façade and terracotta embellishments express an established commercial architectural style that underscores the stability and prosperity of the business.

KELLEY-REPPERT MOTOR COMPANY²²

Wallace O. Kelley and Eugene C. Reppert founded the Kelley-Reppert Motor Company in 1917. Both men had backgrounds in business and it is likely that they met while working for the Ford Motor Company. Eugene Reppert was a stenographer by training. During the early years of the twentieth century, he worked for a variety of companies, including the Kansas City Stockyards and the Pabst Brewing Company. Wallace Kelley, a resident of Kansas City, Kansas, first appears in the city directory in 1908. That year he worked as a machinist for the National Cash Register Company. Two years later, he was a machinist with the Ford Motor Company and the following year, 1911, he was a salesman for Ford. In 1914, Reppert joined Ford as a stenographer.

In 1905, the original Ford dealership in Kansas City was established at 425 Delaware, in Kansas City's original commercial district. The following year, the dealership's manager, Charles C. Meade, moved the operation to 318-320 East 11th Street, a more central location just south of the city's business and banking center. By 1912, the dealership relocated to 1608 Grand Avenue and by 1914, it moved to 1710 Grand

²⁰ John Burchard and Albert Bush-Brown, *The Architecture of America: A Social and Cultural History* (Boston, Massachusetts: Little, Brown and Company, 1961), 242.

²¹ "Motor Show Was Big Even in 1915." *Kansas City (MO) Star*, 27 February 1955 (Envelope Clippings File. Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections).

²² Unless otherwise noted, the history of the Kelley-Reppert Motor Company and other Ford dealerships in Kansas City comes from Kansas City, Missouri city directories published between 1905 and 1955.

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Avenue — both locations were in the heart of the burgeoning Automobile Row. By that time, George T. O'Maley was managing the retail branch and Charles Meade was running the factory.

The 1916 city directory indicates that the Ford Motor Company operated two sales and service locations along Automobile Row. In addition to the business at 1710 Grand Avenue, a second service location was a couple of blocks away at 1905 McGee Street. That year, Eugene Reppert managed the McGee Street service station and Wallace Kelley was in charge of the service department for Ford at an unspecified branch. In 1917, the first listing appears for the Kelley-Reppert Motor Company at 404 Admiral Boulevard.

In 1919, the Kelley-Reppert Motor Company was one of three authorized Ford automobile dealers and service centers identified in the city directory. All three served different parts of the city. While Kelley-Reppert was firmly planted on the north edge of the central business district with easy access to North Kansas City, the Rice-Sturtevant Motor Company, from its location at 27th Street and Benton Boulevard, served the neighborhoods on the east side of the city; and G. T. O'Maley, Kelley and Reppert's former employer, remained in the heart of automobile row at 18th and McGee streets. It is interesting to note that while the city directory listings for Rice-Sturtevant and O'Maley describe these companies as providing automobile "Sales and Service," the listing for Kelley-Reppert describes the company as "Ford Authorized Distributors Service Repairs and Supplies."

In the summer of 1919, the Kelley-Reppert Motor Company hired the Kansas City architecture firm of Keene & Simpson to prepare plans for a new car dealership building at 416-422 Admiral Boulevard. A building permit issued in January 1920 described the concrete, brick, and stone building as two to three stories in height with a nearly square footprint measuring 90 feet by 87 feet. The E. L. Winn Construction Company erected the building at an estimated cost of \$90,000. The building is notable for its reinforced concrete structure that included a grid of round and square piers, following Kahn's model. The building's design would also accommodate the addition of another story in the future, if necessary.

Ownership of the Kelley-Reppert Motor Company gradually evolved. By 1925, the manager, Damon E. Williams, joined Reppert, the company's president, and Kelley, the vice president, as an officer of the company. While it is not listed in earlier directories, in 1925 Kelley-Reppert also operated a used car operation from their original building at 404-406 Admiral Boulevard. It appears that Eugene Reppert may have retired from the company around 1929 in that while he remains listed in the city directory, no

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occupation is given and he is no longer an officer of the Kelley-Reppert Motor Company.²³ At this time, Wallace Kelley was president and Damon Williams held positions as vice president, secretary, and treasurer.

Other changes were coming as well. The company was expanding and beginning to transition from the Kelley-Reppert Motor Company to the Kelley-Williams Motor Company. By 1933, Kelley-Reppert continued to operate at its two locations on Admiral Boulevard; Kelley-Williams was operating two locations, with new car sales at 1800 East 15th Street and used car sales at 1701 McGee Street. Two years later, the Kelley-Reppert Motor Company had become the Kelley Motor Company. Wallace Kelley served as president of Kelley-Williams Motor Company and Kelley Motor Company. Kelley-Williams expanded to include new car sales at 1801-1807 McGee Street; used car sales offices at 1803-1815 McGee Street and 1800 East 15th Street; used truck sales at 2523 Grand Avenue; and a service station at 4936 Main Street. Kelley and Williams also owned the Kelley-Williams Lincoln Company at 1901-1903 Grand Avenue.

By 1940, while the main Kelley-Williams dealership of Ford, Mercury, and Lincoln-Zephyr vehicles had moved to 1925 Burlington Street in North Kansas City, they continued to operate a wholesale parts stores on the Country Club Plaza and at 416-422 Admiral Boulevard. By 1945, it appears that the companies' fortunes changed. Their only location was at 807 McGee and offered wholesale auto parts and automobiles.

By this time, they no longer occupied 416-422 Admiral Boulevard. During the 1940s, the former Ford dealership housed a series of aviation-related businesses, including the Missouri Aviation Corporation, an airplane service and supply company; the Missouri Aviation Institute; and the Frye Aircraft Company. In 1950, the Holland Engraving Company assumed ownership of the building.

In 2003, 422 Admiral, LLC purchased the building. They plan a tax credit rehabilitation to house their corporate offices.

ARCHITECTS

Architects Arthur S. Keene and Leslie B. Simpson had a long and highly respected partnership in Kansas City, Missouri. A native of Massachusetts, Keene received his architectural training at the Massachusetts

²³ Eugene Reppert was named Police Chief a few years later and oversaw efforts at reforming the Kansas City police department during the final years of the Pendergast Machine. He was charged with perjury and obstruction of justice in a case related to the Union Station Massacre of 1933 and was later cleared of all charges.

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Institute of Technology, from which he graduated in 1898 before coming to Kansas City in 1907.²⁴ Simpson, a native of Calhoun, Missouri, arrived in Kansas City in 1902 after completing a correspondence course in architecture. Both worked as draftsmen for the noted Kansas City architecture firm of Howe, Hoit & Cutler before entering into practice together in 1909 and establishing offices in the Reliance Building in downtown Kansas City.²⁵

Keene & Simpson were respected for their conservative designs that withstood the test of time. In addition to many residential commissions, the firm is noted for its larger, more visible projects, including the original St. Luke's Hospital building, the Scottish Rite Temple, the Jackson County Court House, the Sweeney Building, and the City National Bank building, all of which are in Kansas City. They also designed the State Office Building in Jefferson City, Missouri and the Philtower Building in Tulsa, Oklahoma. A 1914 article described the firm as "thoroughly in touch with the Kansas City spirit, and interested in every movement which has her welfare at heart."²⁶ The firm remained active into the post-World War II period, designing modern additions to the city skyline, such as the Commerce Tower (9th and Main streets); 811 Main Street; and the Walnut Tower apartment building (8th and Walnut streets).

Both partners were active members of the Kansas City Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, each serving a term as president. Keene was also a member of the Kansas City Plan Commission and chair of a commission established to revise the Kansas City building code. Simpson also served on the commission to update the building code and served a term as president of the Architectural League of Kansas City. An obituary for Leslie Simpson described him as "[an] admired technician who approached

²⁴ "Arthur S. Keene," *Skylines* (June/July 1966) : 10. Architect File. City of Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission. Kansas City, Missouri.

²⁵ "Leslie B. Simpson Dies," 15 December 1961. Architect File. City of Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission. Kansas City, Missouri.

²⁶ *Pen and Sunlight Sketches of Greater Kansas City* (Kansas City, Missouri: The American Illustrating Company, 1914), 104.

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problems in a practical, optimistic manner and whose solutions were evaluations of conditions as the actually existed."²⁷

In 1955, the firm became Keene, Simpson & Murphy when architect John Murphy joined the partnership. Arthur Keene retired from practice in 1961 at the age of eighty-five. In December of that year, Leslie Simpson died at the age of seventy-six, just two weeks shy of his planned retirement.

²⁷ "Leslie B. Simpson," 15 December 1961. Architect File. J. C. Nichols Scrapbooks. City of Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission, Kansas City, Missouri.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All of Lots 15 thru 17, Block 8 and the West half of the vacated part of Locust Lane lying east and adjacent, except the part of said lots on Page Street and Admiral Boulevard, Rice's Addition, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary for this resource corresponds to the city lots on which it was constructed and with which it has been historically associated.

PHOTOGRAPH LOG

Photographer: Kerry Davis, Historic Preservation Services, LLC
Date of Photographs: April 2004
Location of Original Negatives: McCownGordon Construction, LLC
One West Armour Boulevard, Suite 200
Kansas City, Missouri 64111

Photo No.	View
1	South (front) and east elevations. View looking northwest.
2	South (front) elevation. View looking north.
3	West and north elevations. View looking southeast.
4	East and north elevations. View looking southwest.
5	Original entry. View looking south.
6	Showroom. View looking east.
7	Showroom mezzanine and sales office. View looking northwest.
8	Showroom sales office and mezzanine. View looking north.
9	Staircase between showroom and mezzanine. View looking west.
10	Mezzanine. View looking east.
11	Service area (typical). View looking northwest.
12	Outbuilding. View looking northeast.

KELLEY-REPPERT MOTOR COMPANY BUILDING
KANSAS CITY, JACKSON COUNTY, MISSOURI
UTM: 15/303 577E/4329679N

INTERIOR
KEY













